

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ALLEN BOYD

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 17, 2001

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall no. 385, I was unable to cast my vote due to a previous commitment in my district.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE
TECH TALENT ACT, H.R. 3130**HON. JOHN B. LARSON**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 17, 2001

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that America has long recognized that its long-term strength and security, and its ability to recover and sustain high levels of economic growth, depends on maintaining its edge in scientific achievement and technological innovation. Biomedical advances have permitted us to live longer, healthier, and more productively. Advances in agricultural technology have permitted us to be able to feed more and healthier people at a cheaper cost, more efficiently. The information revolution can be seen today in the advanced instruments schools are using to instruct our children and in the vast information resources that are opened up as a result of the linkages created by a networked global society. Our children today can grow up to know, see, and read more, be more diverse, and have more options in their lives for learning and growing. Other emerging technologies—such as nanotechnology—have untold potential to make our lives more exciting, secure, prosperous, and challenging.

Many countries also recognize this and they, therefore, focus their industrial, economic, and security policies on the nurturing and diffusion of technological advancement through all levels of society in a deliberate fashion. Countries that follow this path of nurturing innovation focus a lot of their efforts into recruiting and training the very best engineers and scientists, ensuring that a pipeline which pumps talented and imaginative minds and skills is connected to the needs of the country's socio-economic and security enterprise.

Yet here in this country, this pipeline is broken, threatening the competitive edge we enjoy in the business of technological innovation. Fewer and fewer Americans are getting degrees in scientific and technical fields—even as the demand grows. For example, the number of bachelors degrees awarded in math, computer science, and electrical engineering has fallen 35 percent and 39 percent respectively from their peaks in 1987, at a time when total BA degrees have increased. The number of graduate degrees in those fields has either fallen noticeable or stayed flat. And only about half of all engineering doctoral degrees granted in the U.S. are earned by Americans.

The nation has dealt with this crisis in the recent past by expanding the H1B Visa program to let more foreign residents with science and engineering degrees enter the country. But the H1B program was never in-

tended to be more than an interim solution. The long-term solution has to be ensuring that more Americans get into these fields.

Therefore, today, along with House Science Committee Chairman SHERWOOD BOEHLERT, and Representatives MELISSA HART, MARK UDALL, and MIKE HONDA, I have introduced the Tech Talent Act, H.R. 3130, aimed at increasing the number of scientists, engineers, and technologists in the United States. Senators JOSEPH LIEBERMAN (D-CT), CHRISTOPHER BOND (R-MO), BARBARA MIKULSKI (D-MD), BILL FRIST (R-TN), and PETE DOMENICI (R-NM) introduced a companion bill in the Senate.

This legislation addresses the tech worker shortage by establishing a competitive grant program at the National Science Foundation that rewards universities and community colleges that pledge to increase the number of U.S. citizens or permanent residents obtaining degrees in science, math, engineering and technology (SMET) fields. The pilot program, which will award three-year grants, is authorized at \$25 million in the next fiscal year, with funding expected to increase if the initial results are encouraging.

It always pays to be mindful of the fact—especially in the wake of the September 11 events—that there is a strong and tight linkage between our national security and the level of science and technology proficiency in America. Our strength and leadership in the world is based on the might of our defense, strength of our economy, and the quality of our education system. Without any one of these three components the global preeminence of the nation suffers.

In the House Science Committee room there is an inscription: Where there is no vision, the people perish. To remain a strong nation, we must ensure that the single most important element that keeps us dynamic, innovative, prosperous, and secure—and therefore mighty—is there for us: our students, teachers, researchers, engineers, scientists, and technologists. In short, we need more people with vision. This bill will keep them coming.

I am honored to be a sponsor of this important legislation in the United States House of Representatives.

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Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 384, I was unable to cast my vote due to a previous commitment in my district. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay".

WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 17, 2001

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the women in Afghanistan. Today in Afghanistan, a woman's basic right to vote, to pursue an education, and to join

the job force, is threatened. The Taliban's insistence on secluding women from public life is a political maneuver disguised as "Islamic" law. Before seizing power, the Taliban manipulated and used the rights of women as tools to gain control of the country. To secure financial and political support, the Taliban emulated authoritarian methods typical of many Middle Eastern countries. The Taliban's stand on the seclusion of women is not derived from Islam, but, rather, from a cultural bias found in suppressive movements throughout the region.

Three and a half million Afghan refugees are fighting to survive in bordering countries, and the number has been increasing every day since the U.S. vowed retaliation for the September 11 attacks. Afghan women who fled the ruling Taliban's oppressive regime comprise more than 70 percent of those in refugee camps; many are already starving.

Before 1996, women were 70 percent of the school teachers, 40 percent of the doctors, 50 percent of government workers and 50 percent of the college students in Afghanistan. They were scientists, professors, members of parliament and university professors. Since then, the women and girls of Afghanistan have suffered horribly under the Taliban's rule, forbidden to work or attend school, prohibited from going outside without a close male relative and cut off from health care. Violations of these and other strict rules have resulted in beatings, torture and public executions.

The women and girls who escape these sub-human conditions must not be allowed to starve in refugee camps. Expansion of the U.S. humanitarian aid package and its proper distribution will help ensure that this will not happen.

Today, the treatment of women in Afghanistan is receiving much international attention. The Taliban's discriminatory gender policies have been heavily criticized by outside governments, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Whilst the Taliban's response has been to vigorously defend their position, the opposition alliance fighting the Taliban in the northeast have sought to portray themselves as defenders of women's rights, although whether this is anything more than an opportunistic attempt to garner international support remains to be seen. They themselves have committed human rights abuses.

This pattern of using the status of women to accrue political advantage must be broken.

If the aims of peace and development are ever to be realized in Afghanistan, then women's fundamental human rights must be respected. It is now recognized the world over that progress, social justice, the eradication of poverty, sustained economic growth, and social development all critically depend on the full participation of women on the basis of equality in all spheres of society. As agreed by the governments participating in the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, local, national, regional and global peace is attainable and is inextricably linked to the advancement of women. In the Platform for Action, world governments pledged to take all necessary measures to prevent and eliminate violence and discrimination against women, which are major obstacles to the advancement and empowerment of women.

I rise today to reiterate my support for the women of Afghanistan. It is obligatory that the unalienable rights of these women be restored; an increase in humanitarian aid must